

# EXEGESIS II

## פרשנות המקרא

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THE QUEST FOR P'SHAT:  
TALMUD & G'ONIM

† פִּשַׁט vb. strip off, make a dash, raid  
 cf. As. *pašātu*, expunge, obliterate; NH פִּשַׁט,  
 ram. פִּשַׁט, פִּשַׁט, are stretch out, extend, make  
 lain, so Ar. (بَسَطَ);—Qal Pf. 3 ms. פִּשַׁט Ho 7<sup>1+</sup>, 2  
 s. וּפִשַׁטְתָּ Ju 9<sup>33</sup>, etc.; Impf. 3 ms. וּפִשַׁטְתָּ I S 19<sup>24</sup>;  
 mpl. וּפִשַׁטְתֶּם Ez 26<sup>1</sup>, etc.; Inv. ms. פִּשַׁטְתָּ Is 32<sup>11</sup>;

Pt. pl. פִּשַׁטְתִּים Ne 4<sup>17</sup>;—1. strip off, put off, one's  
 garment (acc.) I S 19<sup>24</sup> Ez 26<sup>16</sup> 44<sup>19</sup> Lv 6<sup>4</sup> (opp.  
 לְבִישׁ), 16<sup>23</sup> (*id.*; both P), Ne 4<sup>17</sup> Ct 5<sup>3</sup>; acc. om.  
 Is 32<sup>11</sup>; of locusts Na 3<sup>16</sup> stripping off (sheaths  
 of wings, cf. Da Dr<sup>Am. 85</sup>). 2. put off (one's  
 shelter), i.e. make a dash (from a sheltered  
 place), c. לָלֶךְ Ju 20<sup>37</sup>, abs. 9<sup>44</sup>; esp. of marauding

† דָּרַשׁ

vb. resort to, seek (cf. Ar. كَرَسَ

*rub over, efface* (a site), *tread* (wheat), fig. *read repeatedly, study*; *ضَرَبَ* beat (a path), *discuss*, Pa. *practise in*; NH *search out* (a meaning), *expound*)—**Qal** Pf. I Ch 10<sup>14</sup>; **Impf.** יִדְרֹשׁ ψ 10<sup>4</sup> +, אֶדְרֹשָׁה I S 28<sup>7</sup>, נִדְרֹשָׁה I K 22<sup>7</sup> +, יִדְרֹשׁוּן Is 55<sup>2</sup>; **Imv.** דְּרֹשׁ I K 22<sup>5</sup> +; **Inf. abs.** דָּרַשׁ Lv 10<sup>16</sup> Dt 23<sup>22</sup>; **cstr.** דָּרַשׁ Dt 22<sup>2</sup> + לְדָרַשׁ Ez 14<sup>7</sup>, לְדָרְיוֹשׁ scribal error for לְדָרַשׁ Ew<sup>§ 239 a</sup> Ol<sup>§ 245 g</sup>) Ezr 10<sup>16</sup>; **Pt.** דָּרַשׁ Dt 11<sup>12</sup> + 10 t., הִדְרֹשׁ I Ch 28<sup>9</sup> + 3 t.; **pass.** דְּרֹשִׁים ψ 111<sup>2</sup>, דְּרֹשָׁה Is 62<sup>12</sup>; **syn.** בִּקֵּשׁ;—  
**1.** (*tread* a place,) *resort to, frequent*, with religious obj., c. acc. loc. Am 5<sup>5</sup> 2 Ch 1<sup>5</sup>, אֶל־ loc. Dt 12<sup>5</sup>.  
**2.** *seek, consult, inquire of*: a. acc. אֶל־הֵימָּן Gn 25<sup>22</sup> (J) Ex 18<sup>15</sup> (E) I S 9<sup>9</sup> I K 22<sup>8</sup> 2 K 3<sup>11</sup> 8<sup>8</sup> 22<sup>13.18</sup> I Ch 15<sup>13</sup> 2 I 30 2 Ch 18<sup>7</sup> 34<sup>21</sup> ψ 24<sup>6</sup> 78<sup>34</sup> Je 21<sup>2</sup> 37<sup>7</sup> Ez 20<sup>1.3</sup>; *the ark of God* I Ch 13<sup>3</sup>; *word of Yahweh*

## SHABBAT 63A שבת דף סג עמוד א

**MISHNAH.** A MAN MUST NOT GO OUT WITH A SWORD, BOW, SHIELD, LANCE, OR SPEAR; AND IF HE DOES GO OUT, HE INCURS A SIN-OFFERING.

**R. ELIEZER SAID:** THEY ARE ORNAMENTS FOR HIM. BUT THE SAGES MAINTAIN, THEY ARE MERELY SHAMEFUL, FOR IT IS SAID, "AND THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES, AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNING HOOKS: NATION SHALL NOT LIFT UP SWORD AGAINST NATION, NEITHER SHALL THEY LEARN WAR ANY MORE."

משנה. לא יצא האיש לא בסייף ולא בקשת, ולא בתריס, ולא באלה, ולא ברומח, ואם יצא - חייב חטאת.

רבי אליעזר אומר: תכשיטין הן לו, וחכמים אומרים: אינן אלא לגנאי, שנאמר: "וכתתו חרבותם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות ולא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב ולא ילמדו עוד מלחמה."

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What is R. Eliezer's reason for maintaining that they are ornaments for him? —

Because it is written, “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, Thy glory and thy majesty.”

R. Kahana objected to Mar son of R. Huna: But this refers to the words of the Torah?

He replied—

A verse cannot be purged of its plain meaning,

מאי טעמא דרבי אליעזר דאמר תכשיטין  
הן לו? דכתיב: “חגור חרבך על ירך גבור  
הודך והדרך.”

אמר ליה רב כהנא למר בריה דרב הונא:  
האי בדברי תורה כתיב! - אמר ליה:

אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו.

## דברים פרשת כי תצא פרק כה

- (ה) כִּי־יֵשְׁבוּ אַחִים יַחְדָּו וּמֵת אֶחָד מֵהֶם וּבֶן אֵין־לוֹ לֹא־תִהְיֶה אֲשֶׁת־הַמֵּת הַחוּצָה לְאִישׁ זָר יִבְמָה יָבֵא עָלֶיהָ וּלְקַחָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבַמָּה:
- (ו) וְהָיָה הַבְּכוֹר אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵד יִקּוּם עַל־שֵׁם אָחִיו הַמֵּת וְלֹא־יִמָּחַה שְׁמוֹ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

## YEVAHOT 24A יבמות דף כד עמוד א

Our Rabbis learned: “And it shall be, that the firstborn of the levirate marriage shall succeed in the name of his brother;” in respect of inheritance.

You say, ‘in respect of inheritance’; perhaps it means ‘in respect of the name’: Joseph shall be called Joseph; if Johanan he shall be called Johanan! — Here it is stated, “shall succeed in the name of his brother;” and elsewhere it is stated, “They shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.” As the ‘name’ that was mentioned there is inheritance, so the ‘name’ which was mentioned here is inheritance.

Said Raba: Although throughout the Torah no text loses its ordinary meaning, here the lexical analogy has come and entirely deprived the text of its ordinary meaning.

ת"ר: "והיה הבכור אשר תלד יקום על

שם אחיו" - לנחלה.

אתה אומר: לנחלה, או אינו אלא

לשם? יוסף - קורין אותו יוסף, יוחנן -

קורין אותו יוחנן? נאמר כאן "יקום על

שם אחיו", ונאמר להלן "על שם

אחיהם יקראו בנחלתם." מה שם

האמור להלן נחלה, אף שם האמור

כאן לנחלה...

אמר רבא: אע"ג דבכל התורה כולה

אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו, הכא

אתאי גזרה שוה אפיקתיה מפשטיה

לגמרי.

# NATRONAY GAON (9<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)

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Thereafter [following Shaḥarit] they recited Kaddish and studied Torah. Those who wished studied Mishnah, while others studied Talmud, in fulfillment of the advice of the Sages: “Let everyone divide his time into thirds: [one third *mikra*] one third *mishnah*, and one third *talmud*.”

But when poverty overwhelmed the world and scholars were forced to earn a living, they were unable to do their thirds daily, so they studied Talmud alone—ignoring Bible and Mishnah—relying on the [homily] that “all rivers [i.e. Tanakh and Mishnah] run to the sea [i.e. Talmud]” ...

(*Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim, Sha`arei Teshuvah* 55)



## רבינו סעדיה גאון

SE`ADYAH GAON (882-942)

- Se`adyah was the first rabbinic scholar to compile a systematic and methodical commentary on the Bible, paying attention to both its legislative and narrative sections.
- He was responding to the challenges presented to rabbinic Judaism by:
  - Islam
  - Karaism

# IBN EZRA (GEN. 2:11)

“One [of the rivers of Paradise] was named Pishon.”

”שם האחד פישון”.

The Gaon (i.e. Se`adyah) said that Pishon is the River of Egypt (the Nile)... but there is no proof of that identification; rather he translated [the Land of] Havila tendentiously, without a tradition to that effect. He similarly rendered [into Arabic the names of] tribes, countries, animals, birds, and minerals. Perhaps he saw them in a dream? He surely erred in some—as I shall indicate *ad loc.*—so we need not rely on his dreams.

Perhaps he did so for the honor of God, translating the Torah into the Arabic language and script, lest they say that there are *mizvot* in the Torah that we do not understand.

אמר הגאון כי פישון יאור מצרים... ואין ראייה על פישון שהוא היאור... כי אין לו קבלה. וכן עשה במשפחות ובמדינות ובחיות ובעופות ובאבנים. אולי בחלום ראם. וכבר טעה במקצתם, כאשר אפרש במקומו. אם כן לא נשען על חלומותיו.

אולי עשה כן לכבוד השם, בעבור שתרגם התורה בלשון ישמעאל ובכתיבתם, שלא יאמרו כי יש בתורה מצות לא ידענום.

It is incumbent upon every rational person to always regard the words of the Torah according to their obvious meaning ( **ט'אהר** *zahir*), i.e., the one best known ( **משהור** *mashhur*) most widely utilized (*alkathir al'isti`mal* **אלאסתעמאל** **אלכת'יר**) by the speakers of that language, since the *raison d'etre* of every book is to have its contents attained fully by its readers, **unless** sense perception or rational knowledge contradict that obvious meaning, or [unless] that obvious meaning itself contradicts another verse of unambiguous meaning, or [unless] it contradicts a [reliable] tradition.

If he sees that by interpreting the word according to its obvious meaning he will cause belief in [the literal truth] of one of these four aforementioned things, he must know that that verse is not to be understood according to that obvious meaning, but that it contains one or several words which must be figurative ( *majaz* **מג'אז**).

When he realizes just which type of figurative expression it is he can reconcile it with the [word of] unambiguous meaning and restore that verse to agreement with the sensory, the rational, the other verse [of unambiguous meaning], and tradition.

בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק ג

(כ) וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה כִּי הוּא הֵיטָה אִם כָּל־חַי:

דברים פרשת ואתחנן פרק ד

(כד) כִּי יִקּוֹק אֱלֹהֶיךָ אִשׁ אֹכְלָה הוּא אֵל קָנָא: פ

שמות פרשת כי תשא פרק לג

(כ) וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוֹכֵל לִרְאֹת אֶת־פָּנַי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי:

שמות פרשת משפטים פרק כד

(י) וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

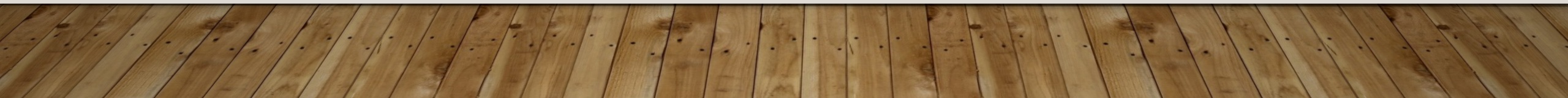
שמות פרשת משפטים פרק כא

(כד) עֵינַי תַּחַת עֵינַי שֹׁן תַּחַת שֹׁן יָד תַּחַת יָד רֶגֶל תַּחַת רֶגֶל:

In light of the above, I shall provide illustrations of these four [principles]. To the first instance, belongs the Torah's saying "Adam named his wife Eve for she was the mother of every living [creature]" (Gen. 3:20). If we were to leave the words "every living [creature]" (כל-חי) according to their best known meaning, we would be contradicting sense perception because that would imply that the lion, ox, donkey, and other animals, were children of Eve! Since it is never possible to deny sense perception, we believe that the verse contains an elliptical word (*mudamar* מצ'מר) that will reconcile it with the sense of observation/sight, as we shall later explain. [N.B. In his translation, Se`adyah inserts the word "articulate" ( *natiq* נאטק) after "living [creature]" thereby limiting Eve's motherhood to humanity.

To the second instance, belongs the verse "For the LORD, your God, is a consuming fire" (Dt. 4:24). Were we to believe this according to its obvious meaning, it would contradict reason, because reason dictates that every fire is newly created, inadequate, and subject to change after its inception, while the Creator is not subject to any of these [properties]. We therefore maintain that there is a figurative element in the verse that reconciles reason with the [literal] text.

[N.B. In his translation, Se`adyah inserts the word "penalty" (עקב) before "the LORD," implying that not God, essentially, but only His attribute of justice, can resemble a consuming fire.]



To the third instance, belongs God's, grand and exalted, saying "Do not test the LORD, your God" (Dt. 6:16), which is of unambiguous import. When it later says, however, "take out your tithes, give charity of your own money, and test Me thereby" (Malakhi 3:6), we learn that this word (i.e., "test") is one which bears several meanings, including some which are not well-known, but which would reconcile it with the unambiguous Torah verse, as we shall explain in its place.

To the fourth instance, belongs God's prohibition "Do not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (Ex. 23:19), upon which [basis] Tradition forbade eating any meat with any milk. Since the Tradition was borne by people who had witnessed this [prohibition in practice] with their very eyes, we are obliged to apply to this verse an acceptable [nonliteral] interpretation (תכ'ריג' *takhrij*) which will reconcile it with the prophetic Tradition.

# IBN EZRA (EXODUS 21:24) עין תחת עין

- Rav Se`adyah said that this verse cannot be understood literally (כמשמעו), for if one man hit another and deprived him of one third of his sight, how could he be struck such a blow [by the court] without [danger] of increase or deficit? Perhaps he will be completely blinded? An even greater difficulty is presented by burns, wounds and bruises that, if they were inflicted in a sensitive area, might be lethal, and this defies reason!
- Said Ben Zuta [his putative Karaite antagonist]: Does not another verse say, "Just as one inflicts a wound upon another, so shall he be afflicted" (כן ינתן בו; Lev. 24:20)?
- The Gaon replied: We have [in Hebrew] a letter כ that stands in lieu of the word "upon" (עליו), so that verse means, "so shall it be placed upon him," referring to the penalty.
- Ben Zuta retorted [by means of the verse], "Just as he did, so shall it be done to him" (op.cit., 19).
- The Gaon replied: Samson said [similarly], "Just as they have done to me, so shall I do to them" (Judges 15:11), and yet Samson did not take their wives away and give them to others, he only retaliated for what they had done to him.
- Ben Zuta responded: If [granting Se`adyah's premise that the penalty is monetary not corporal] the attacker is poor, how shall he be punished?
- The Gaon replied: And [granting your premise of talion] if a blind man were to blind a sighted man, how would he be punished? The poor man, at least, can acquire wealth and make restitution; the blind man will never be able to make compensation.
- The rule is **we cannot interpret the Torah's commandments completely without relying upon the Sages**. Just as we received the [written] Torah from our ancestors, so did we receive [from them] the oral Torah; there is no difference between them. The interpretation of "An eye for an eye," then, is that he would deserve to have his own eye [struck] were he not able to ransom himself.

# SH'MUEL BAR CHOFNI (D. 1034)

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- The third matter is that some words require explanation and others do not. In the introduction to our commentary on *Parashat Hukkat*, we have already addressed this adequately concerning seven ways of interpretation. The word of God, exalted, and of His messengers, peace be upon them, can be divided into two categories: literal (*ḥaqqiqah*) and metaphorical (*majaz*). There is no metaphor that has no literal sense at its linguistic roots, because metaphor is only a deviation from literalness. However, there are words of literal meaning that have no metaphorical usage [in expressions] that are not used metaphorically by speakers of that language. In such a case, the literal sense stands by itself and both the literal and metaphorical meanings are the same.
- This being the case, if God or His messengers address us, we are bound to take them literally and not metaphorically as long as there is no patent proof that a metaphor is intended.



The seventh matter is to leave verses as they are and interpret them according to their patent senses (*zawahirha*) (ט'ואהרהא) in consonance with the Sages' statement "no verse can be purged of its literal sense." Exceptions are contradiction to sense perception, reason, another unequivocal verse, and tradition. If this is the case, it is necessary to seek a [non-literal] interpretation and resolution to reconcile sensory perception, reason, the other verse (*maktub*) (מכתוב), and tradition (*manqul*) (מנקול). The result is to treat the word that agrees with reason and tradition as unequivocal (*muḥkim*) (מהחכם) and that which contradicts them as figurative (*mutashabih* מתשאבהא).

The ninth matter is that anything that is [either] indicated by a proof-text, clarified by Scripture, or established by rational proof, should be declared firmly and decisively; whereas those interpretations that the sages call *midrashot* or *aggadot*, whatever speculation produces or the intellect yields regarding a verse that does not [deal with] the commandments, he may embellish and adorn his speech with it [but] he should declare it to be [merely] possible or straightforward.

It is not permissible for us to believe the truth of something—when there are proofs that it is false—only because one of the early authorities said it. Rather, it is necessary to examine the matter rationally. Whatever has proof indicating its necessary [axiomatic] acceptance, we will accept; whatever has proof of possibility, we will consider possible; and whatever [is indicated to be] impossible, we will consider impossible.

R. David Kimhi (I Samuel 28:24):

זהו פי' רב שמואל בן חפני הגאון ז"ל ואמר אף על פי שמשמעות דברי החכמים ז"ל בגמרא כי אמת היה שהחיתה האשה את שמואל לא יקובלו הדברים במקום שיש מכחישים להם מן השכל.

This is the interpretation of R. Shmuel ben Ḥofni, ob"m. He said that although the Sages appear to have confirmed in the Gemara that the woman resurrected Samuel, this cannot be accepted because it contradicts reason.

## רש"י

RASHI (1040-1105) is, unquestionably, the brightest star in the firmament of traditional Biblical exegesis. The acronym that makes up his name has been decoded, alternatively, as *Rabban Shel Israel* (the teacher--par excellence--of Israel) and a Hassidic (Kotzker) tradition names him as "the brother of our holy Torah." Almost as many super-commentaries have been composed to his commentary as to the Torah itself. (The list, which has never really been fully compiled, runs well beyond 300!)

- Whereas Se`adyah Gaon wrote his commentaries within the cultural and intellectual framework of the Arabic-Muslim world, RASHI wrote his within the context of medieval Christendom.
- Whereas Se`adyah was acquainted with the literary and scientific accomplishments of his host society and they are reflected throughout his work, RASHI's approach to Tanakh was focused more on traditional Jewish sources and ideas.
- Whereas Se`adyah could draw on an extensive religious philosophical literature to resolve questions of Biblical theology, RASHI was restricted to the use of the Talmud and Midrash.
- Whereas Se`adyah could draw upon the nascent philological insights of Arabs and Jews of the Middle East and North Africa, RASHI was constrained to use the older, outdated, works of Menahem ben Saruq and Dunash Ibn Labrat (Spain, 10<sup>th</sup> century).



## רש"י בראשית ג:ח

- There are many aggadic midrashim, and they already have been appropriately arranged by our rabbis in *Genesis Rabbah* and other midrashic anthologies.
- I, however, have come only to [establish] the straightforward meaning (*peshuto*) of a verse, and [will utilize only] those *aggadot* that settle the language of the text, [like] “a word fitly spoken.”

(Proverbs 25:11)

יש מדרשי אגדה רבים, וכבר  
סידרום רבותינו על מכונם  
ב"בראשית רבה" ובשאר מדרשות.

ואני לא באתי אלא לפשוטו של  
מקרא, ולאגדה המיישבת דברי  
מקרא, "דבר דבור על אופניו."

(משלי כה:יא)

# THE FIRST PRINTED HEBREW BOOK REGGIO DE CALABRIA (1475)

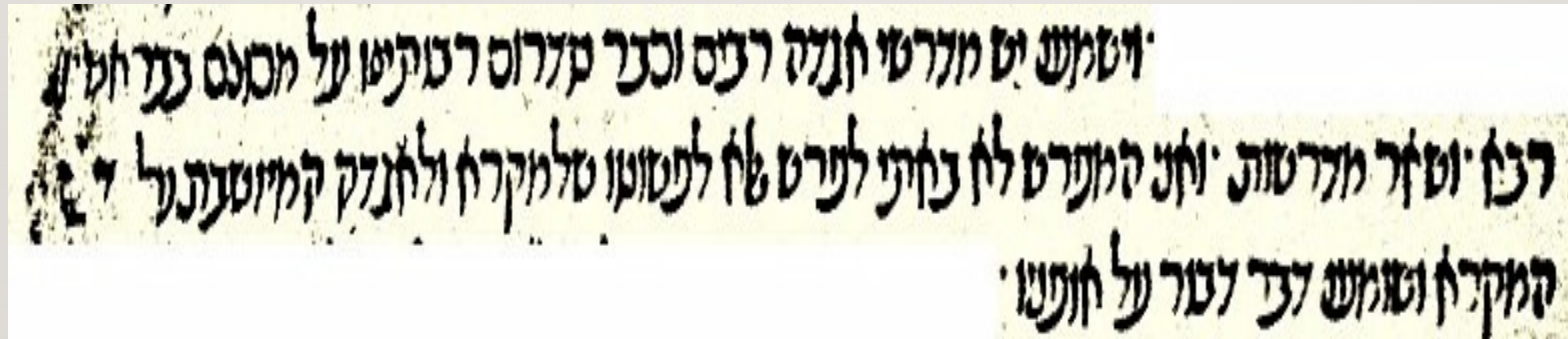
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- RASHI's Commentary on the TORAH



# RASHI GENESIS 1:8

- His purpose as an exegete (PARSHAN)



וַיִּשְׂמַע יְהוָה מִדְּבַר אֲנָהּ רָבִים וּכְבֹד קְדוּשָׁה רַבָּה עַל מִסְגָּר חַיִּים  
רָבִים וְשֵׁר מִדְּרֵטוֹת וְאֵת הַמַּעֲרָם לֵאמֹר בְּחַיֵּי לַעֲרֵם אֵל לַעֲטוּנוּ סֵל מִקְרָא וְלֵאנֹכָה קְמוּטַעַת עַל דְּ  
הַמִּקְרָא וְשׂוֹמֵשׁ דְּבַר לְבַר עַל חֻטְנוּ